

Creating a New Bottom Line for Drug Policy in New Mexico

This memorial proposes the creation of a Drug Policy Taskforce to assess our current approach to drug policy.

The **New Mexico Health Policy Commission** has agreed to host the Drug Policy Taskforce, which will include representation from the legislature and experts in the fields of public safety, public health, substance abuse prevention, behavioral health treatment, and harm reduction.

The Taskforce will use a “four-pillar approach” to drug policy.



- PREVENTION
- TREATMENT

- HARM REDUCTION
- LAW ENFORCEMENT



Why do we need to reassess our approach to drug policy?

- An estimated 114,275,000 Americans aged 12 or over (46.1% of the US population aged 12 and over) have used an illicit drug at least once in their lifetimes.ⁱ
- Fifty-five thousand New Mexicans need, but are not receiving, treatment for an illicit drug use problem and another 124,000 need treatment for alcohol use.ⁱⁱ
- New Mexico spent approximately \$22 million to incarcerate nonviolent drug possession offenders in 2007.
- Of the approximately 5,600 people in New Mexico’s state prison system in 2002, approximately 87 percent were assessed as needing substance abuse services and 70 percent as substance abusing or dependent.ⁱⁱⁱ
- We must increase our drug prevention efforts throughout the state using science and evidence-based programming. 43.6% of 9th through 12th graders in New Mexico reported using alcohol in 2007.^{iv}

What will the Taskforce propose?

The Taskforce will offer recommendations for New Mexico’s drug policies that will:

- 1) Improve public safety
- 2) Save money and resources
- 3) Reduce negative consequences associated with drug abuse

ⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), Office of Applied Studies, 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Tables 1.1A and 1.1B,

<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k7NSDUH/tabs/Sect1peTabs1to46.htm#Tab1.1A>.

ⁱⁱ SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2004 and 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ Behavioral Health Needs and Gaps in New Mexico, the Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc., Final Report, July 2002

^{iv} New Mexico Department of Health and Public Education Department, "Alcohol Use and Related Behaviors," New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (2007).